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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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SPOT COMMENTARY: Hijacking Update

There have been few significant developments in the hostage situation since early this morning. Shia Amal leader Nabih Barri, however, has reiterated his threat to abandon his role in the hijacking, if the Shia detainees in Israel are not released.

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The Tehran press reports that Lebanese Hizballah leader, Shaykh Fadlallah, gave a speech in Beirut this morning in which he spoke against the practice of taking hostages, but he condemned the US for making military threats. Fadlallah also criticized the US for remaining silent on Israel's detention of Muslims.

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According to press reports from Beirut, thousands of Shias chanting anti-American slogans marched to the airport today in a show of solidarity with the hijackers. Sunni leaders called a strike in Beirut today to protest lawlessness in the city, and Shia Amal gunmen roamed the streets trying to prevent shopkeepers from closing their shops.

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The Israeli Government appears to be making a concerted effort to get back in step with the US position on not negotiating with terrorists, according to our Embassy in Tel Aviv. On two occasions, Prime Minister Peres expressed support and praise for the stance taken by the Administration.

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The Embassy also reports that what it believes is the emerging Israeli stance decoupling the release of the Atlit prisoners from the hijacking. Peres, Deputy Prime Minister

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Shamir, and Defense Minister Rabin all stated that the release is related solely to security conditions in South Lebanon.

-- The relative calm there at the moment could pave the way for some early releases, but to preserve domestic capability the government probably will proceed deliberately and in stages over an extended period in releasing Shias held at Atlit.

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DDI Working Group on TWA Hijacking

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